(d) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to curb the number of such persons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Passport Office Bangalore issued 1,52,986 passports from January to December, 2003.

(b) A total of 4,494 passport applications were pending in Passport Office Banlgalore as on 09.07.2004.

(c) Yes.

(d) Irrespective of whether a person utilises the passport or not, the passports are issued on the basis of submission of required documentation and receipt of clear police verification report.

Prisoners of War in Pakistani Jails

†952. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian prisoners in Pakistani's jails;

(b) the number of Prisoners of War out of them;

(c) the number of Prisoners of War out of them who have not been released so far despite completion of their sentence; and

(d) what measures Government are taking to get them released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (d) As per available information, a large number of Indian prisoners, including 930 civilians, 407 fishermen, 54 Prisoners of War, and 2 missing Indian defence personnel are presently believed to be in Pakistan's custody.

Pakistan has never acknowledged the presence of Indian Prisoners of War in their custody.

Government, through diplomatic channels, have been consistently taking up the matter with Pakistan. The issue was also taken up during the Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan held in New Delhi on June 27-28, 2004.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.